

Gaibandha BNP leader chartgesheeted in eight cases of extortion, attack

Four of the cases against Chhana filed by party leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha



HAMIDUL HUQ CHHANA



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Charge sheets have been submitted against Gaibandha district BNP president Hamidul Huq Chhana and some front ranking party leaders in eight cases for alleged extortion, attack on opponent political activists and deception.

The charge sheets were submitted to magistrate courts on Wednesday and Thursday, police and court sources said yesterday.

Chhana and his associates face 10 cases for alleged extortion and creating violence during the four-party alliance rule, police sources said.

One of eight charge sheets filed relate to the attack on an Awami League procession in the town allegedly by followers of Chhana October 28 last year. The case was filed by Gaibandha town AL secretary Sathe Piyarul Islam. Fifteen people including Chhana is accuse in the case.

In the charge sheet, the investigation officer alleged that on October 28, armed cadres of Chhana attacked an AL-led procession in the town. Eleven persons were names as witnesses in the charge sheet.

Another charge sheet was submitted in an extortion case against Chhana and 18 others, filed by former president of district BNP and four-party convener Shiekh Samand Azad.

In the charge sheet, the IO said Chhana's cadres demanded toll from the plaintiff on October 16 last year and threatened to kidnap him for non-payment. Ten witnesses were names in the in the case.

Former organising secretary of

persons including Chhana and district BNP secretary Salim for allegedly demanding Tk five lakh toll on May 25 last year and threatening him for non-compliance. Nine witnesses were named in the charge sheet.

Hamidul Huq Chhana was arrested by a joint team of Ramna and Gaibandha police from near Kakrail mosque in Dhaka on April 21.

Police is hunting for Salim and Sumon Dev, a close aides to Chhana, in connection with cases for alleged toll collection and tender manipulation.

Magistrate Kiron Chandra Roy on May 7 placed Chhana on 10 days' remand.

Police sources here said that during quizzing by Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka Chhana confessed to his involvement in irregularities during the alliance rule.

Two more cases against Chhana are under investigation. One of the cases was filed in connection with the attack on a meeting of Gasibanda Nagoric Committee at Gaibandha town last year, injuring several persons. The meeting ended in a pandemonium as the attackers ransacked furniture and tore down loud speakers.

In the other case, it was alleged that Chhana's cadres attacked a function at Gaibandha circuit house in 2004 which was arranged to bid farewell to the then outgoing deputy commissioner.

Charge sheets in the two cases will be submitted soon, said the Officer-in-Charge of Gaibandha Sadar police station.

AL leader held in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

Police arrested an Awami League leader from Rajshahi city yesterday for his alleged involvement in drug and arms trade.

Police said they raided the rented residence of Boalia upazila Awami League president Sheikh Arman Ali, 42, at Malfa Colony in the evening and arrested him.

He was caught when he was trying to flee, they said.

The drive was led by Assistant Commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Saiful Islam.

Police said Arman was on the 'list of criminals' with Boalia police station and accused in eight cases.

Among the cases, three are for terrorism; two filed under Public Safety Act, two under Speedy Trial Act and one under the Explosives Act.

Besides, many general diaries were filed against Arman for alleged extortion and damaging government property, police said.

24 cops of Rajapur police station closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Twenty-four policemen of Rajapur Police Station under Jhalakati district including its officer-in-charge (OC) Inspector Zakir Hossain have been closed to district police line.

Barisal Range Police authorities have taken the step on Thursday for ensuring better service and restoring image of police, said both Barisal Range Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Aminul Islam and Jhalakati Superintendent of Police (SP) Siddiquar Rahman.

However, a reliable source said the policemen were closed to Jhalakati Police Line for 'nepotism' by giving undue favour to former state minister for law Barrister Shahjahan Omar and 'harassing' his opponents and their refusal to serve general people.

Hilsha rotting, thrown into water for ice crisis

Load shedding reduces ice production to 3000-3500 cans daily against demand for 17,000

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 100 tonnes of Hilsha are rotting and thrown into rivers every day in five coastal districts of Barisal division in the peak season of the fish now due to scarcity of ice, mainly caused by power crisis, according to Yusuf Shikder, secretary of Greater Barisal Fish Wholesale Traders Association here.

Truckloads of ice are brought from Khulna but these can hardly meet part of the demand. Many fishermen have stopped Hilsha netting due to lack of preservation facilities, Yusuf and some other traders and fishermen told this correspondent yesterday.

Yusuf also claimed at least Tk 205 crore Hilsha was rotten in past ten days only due to want of ice. To avoid this, many fishermen stopped going for fishing, which reduced the quantity fish rotting daily now, they said.

They said Sources 3,000 to 3500 cans of ice are produced daily in ice factories in coastal areas Barisal, Patuakhali, Barguna and Bhola districts against the minimum demand for 17,000 cans.

Deep sea fishing is virtually stopped now as rotten Hilsha worth around Tk 40 lakh were thrown into sea or Meghna estuary daily in past week, they claimed.

Golam Mustafa Chowdhury, president of Barguna district trawler owners association, said 19 ice factories in Patharghat coastal area can supply up to 1,000 cans of ice per day against the demands for 9,000 cans.

A trawler needs about 8 cans of ice daily for fishing, he added.

Siddiquar Rahman, a leader of Kuakata Ice Factory Owners Association, said production of ice has come down drastically due to load shedding and low voltages

of electricity. Motors at 10 factories went out of order due to low voltage and 26 ice factories in the area are closed for about a week, he claimed.

Since last Tuesday, only three factories are operating and they can produce around 250 cans of ice per day against the demands for 2,000 cans, he said.

Maznu Gazi, owner of Gazi Fishing in Kuakata, said around 4,000 trawlers are anchored at Mohupur fishing port due to ice crisis. Fishes worth Tk 20 lakh became rotten and were thrown into the sea and Meghna estuary due lack of ice.

Now we are trying to buy ice from Cox's Bazar and Bagerhat, which costs Tk 130 more per can and time also, he added.

Kalapara Upazila Fishing Trawler Crew and Fishermen Cooperative Association President Abdul Mannan Majhi said it is the peak season of Hilsha but ice crisis has dampened the whole business. Thousands of fishermen and traders are being affected, he said.

Anisuzzaman Khan Kamal, president of Barisal district ice factory owners association, said only three out of 14 ice factories in Barisal fishing port are now operating but they also can not produce sufficient ice due to load shedding and low voltage.

He ice factory owners in Barisal have invested over Tk 40 cores but they are also losing due to power crisis.

Yusuf Shikder said, "We are collecting ice from Khulna by truck which costs around Tk 400 more per can of ice".

They claimed load shedding continues for 11-13 hours a day in the region.



Ice brought from Khulna being unloaded at Barisal fishing port yesterday.

Outlaw-turned BNP leader on the run in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Only seven years back, Mihir Kanti Biswas was an armed cadre of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP). He faced at least seven criminal cases including two for murder and three for toll collection, police said.

Mihir, now secretary of Magura Sadar upazila BNP, is on the run to evade arrest after joint forces raided his house soon after promulgation of emergency in January, police said.

A top police official however said they are hunting for him.

Mihir, a high school dropout, started life in early age as a bicycle mechanic. The family lived in a thatched house at Rawtara village in Hazrapur union in Magura Sadar upazila.

The party in power came a magic lamp for Mihir. "Mihir now owns over Tk one crore in cash and property which he has amassed through toll collection and other illegal means", said a former chairman of Hazrapur Union Parishad (UP) seeking anonymity.

Mihir's brother Mrinal, also an alleged outlaw, is now a wealthy businessman, said a resident of adjoining Gouricharanpur village.

"As a BCP cadre, he used to collect toll from local rich people at night earlier. When 4-party alliance came to power, he did it openly by virtue of being a front ranking BNP leader", said a school teacher.

Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) officials in Magura is also investigating the source of his assets amassed in last five years.

"We got some allegations and those were sent to higher authorities

for directive", an ACC official said.

Allegations have that the outlawed turned BNP party leader amassed wealth by toll collection under the shelter of a former lawmaker from Magura-2 constituency.

On January 25, army cordoned the Bhaina area in Magura town to arrest Mihir. But they mistakenly took into custody district Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal president Nazmul Hasan Liton instead of Mihir. Mihir escape and is on the run since then.

"Joint forces' hunt for Mihir is on as he is accused in several criminal cases including murder", said Magura Police Superintendent Mohammad Muslim while talking to this correspondent yesterday.

"Earlier, police could not take step against culprits like Mihir due to interference by the then ruling party leaders.

"After promulgation of emergency, police are now launching drives freely against criminals", the SP said.

A senior BNP leader who is also a lawyer blamed a former lawmaker and a former minister for sheltering and elevating a former outlaw to an important party post.

During Awami League (AL) rule, Mihir had to face police action several times and was imprisoned in cases for murder and toll collection, police records say.

Even during the 4-party alliance rule in 2002, Mihir had to go into hiding when army-led 'Operation Clean Heart' was launched, police sources said.

9x3



A road in Purbo Zinda Bazaar area in Sylhet after yesterday's rain.

6x4

6x3